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Preface to "Planetary Tension Between Orient and Occident and the Opposition of Land and Sea": reorderings and reorientations. [1] [#N1]

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Carl Schmitt published "La tensión planetaria entre Oriente y Occidente y la oposición de Tierra y Mar" for the *Revista de Estudios Políticos* in June 1955. [2] [#N2] It represents a significant revision and translation of an essay he had earlier published in German, which appeared in a collection of essays on the work of Ernst Jünger under the (same) title ("Die geschichtliche Struktur des heutigen Welt-Gegensatzes von Ost und West"). [3] [#N3] When the essay was republished in a collection of Schmitt's work, the editor noted the stark differences between the German "original" and its Spanish "translation": "Eine stark abweichende, eine gewisse Eigenständigkeit besitzende Fassung des Aufsatzes u.d.T. 'La tensión planetaria entre Oriente y Occidente y la oposición entre tierra y mar'" [A strongly diverging version, possessing a certain autonomy, was published by Schmitt under the title of "La tensión planetaria..."]. [4] [#N4] Chief among the differences between the German and Spanish versions are the complete erasure of Schmitt's rather extensive engagement with Jünger's ideas, along with the rearrangement and refinement of Schmitt's reflections on the present.

Of all the essays Schmitt wrote for the *Revista de Estudios Políticos*, the editors have selected this essay for translation and inclusion to this volume of essays, for several reasons. The essay best demonstrates Schmitt's attempt to redirect his contribution to political philosophy away from the pessimism that pervades what was arguably his last major work, *The Nomos of the Earth* (1950). In contrast to the somewhat gloomy and confused forecast for the future of political order in the latter work, in this essay we glimpse an inspired and mature Schmitt extrapolating from his political philosophy of *nomos* a philosophy of Western history, which culminated in the "historical, dialectical tension" manifested in the (then) present Cold War between the US (and its Western allies) and Soviet Russia. The scholarship on Schmitt's political philosophy has continued a debate over whether this reorientation represents an abandonment of his earlier work around sovereign decision-making (and whether or not such abandonment coincided with the rise of Hitler), as well as the autonomy of friend-enemy distinctions under the concept of the political; or whether the advent of "concrete world order thinking" merely reinforces these polemical ideas by giving them an historical context. Schmitt (like his compatriot Martin Heidegger) never disavowed or contradicted his earlier positions; nor did he submit to any US-sponsored denazification campaign by admitting guilt or error in his association with the Nazi Party. On the contrary, his polemical tracts against the criminalization of war advanced by the US during the war years effectively anticipate his antipathy to denazification following the Nuremberg trials. [5] [#N5] For Schmitt, the US-led effort in international politics, which was aimed at criminalizing war between sovereign states, eroded the very foundations of the European interstate legal system or *jus publicum Europaeum*.

As readers of these later essays know, his reflections on guerrilla warfare draw their inspiration directly from this erosion of Eurocentric international law in the postwar era. Indeed, one may go so far as to speculate whether Schmitt's refusal to disavow the implications and interpretations of his "decisionism" for authoritarian and

totalitarian government in fact *obliged* him to develop "concrete world-order thinking" as a way of preserving the importance of his insights for a world that no longer recognized their legality or legitimacy. Where German writers like Hannah Arendt, Ernst Bloch, Hans Blumenberg, and Jürgen Habermas set about dismantling the assumptions behind Schmitt's concepts of the political, the state of exception, and secularization, Schmitt was busy reframing his philosophy around a historical narrative that interrogated the emergence of a new, post-Eurocentric international order, framed around US military and economic hegemony and its collusion with *certain*, i.e., strategically promising, decolonization movements taking place in Asia and Africa.

This leads us to the second reason we found this essay to be deserving of translation and re-publication in the Anglophone world: it highlights the contemporaneity of Schmitt's reflections and engagements with those of other major European thinkers of his time, regarding the present and future of a post-Eurocentric world order. Indeed, one is struck by the continuous publication of Schmitt's writing in Europe throughout the postwar decades, with almost simultaneous translations of his essays from German into most of the major European languages as well as Japanese, Chinese, and Korean (see Maschke). In any case, Schmitt's interlocutors included R. G. Collingwood, Alfred Toynbee, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer of the Frankfurt School, Alexandre Kojève, Jacob Taubes, and Martin Heidegger (in addition to the aforementioned writers: see above). Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism*, published in 1951, was published one year after the original (German) publication of Schmitt's *Nomos of the Earth*; like the latter, it attempts a comprehensive analysis of the (Eurocentric) interstate system combining the philosophical, economic, bureaucratic-administrative and political-legal foundations of Europe and its colonial possessions between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Her dialogue with Schmitt has been well documented. A less evident correspondence, however, may lie behind Schmitt's reflections on the question of technology. Heidegger published "The Question Concerning Technology" in 1954, and much of Schmitt's emphasis on relating the concept of *nomos* and the advent of the industrial revolution to "concrete world-order thinking" in "Planetary Tension" cannot but appear as a veiled critique of Heidegger's own attempt to develop a theory of modernity through a reading of Western philosophy. [\[6\]](#) [\[#N6\]](#) Again, at stake in both thinkers during this period was the lasting significance of their respective philosophies before the reorganization of Europe by the US-led NATO and United Nations, as well as the seemingly permanent threat of nuclear catastrophe.

Finally, "La tensión planetaria" provides an original insight into the historical relationship between the discovery and conquest of the Americas and the exploration of the open seas, on the one hand; and the late 18th-early 19th century industrial revolution in Britain, on the other. By posing this relationship along the lines of a dialectical "Challenge-Response" in world history, Schmitt displaces the East-West dichotomy taking shape in the US-Soviet Cold War (and built on earlier narratives of Oriental "difference") in favor of an epistemological dichotomy between terrestrial and maritime existence as competing models of international law and order. This displacement of US-Soviet conflict re-centers the importance of the age of discovery and exploration as the stimulus ("Challenge") that led to the "unfettered" development of technology. In contrast to the emphasis that world historians place on the industrial and political revolutions of the late eighteenth-early nineteenth centuries as the origin of modern technology, bureaucracy, industrial capitalism, war, and revolution, Schmitt controversially places these developments at the *end* of a longer narrative, in which these eruptions signify the attempted "Response" to the world-historical "Challenge" of creating and maintaining the first truly global world order as it first entered the European imagination in the age of discovery and exploration (15th-16th centuries). The reframing of this narrative has an immediate "defamiliarizing" effect, compelling us to consider the partial, incomplete, and hybrid transmission and resonance of both Challenge and Response both within and outside Europe. On a more immediate level, Schmitt's contention leads him to call into question the possibility of technology-for-technology's sake serving as the Response to and handmaiden of a new global order, the way it effectively did in the industrial Revolution. In Schmitt's own words: "A historical truth...is true only once" (see "Planetary Tension").

With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the crowning of America's century seemed all but assured. Two odd decades later, scholars of international law and policy appear relatively confident in their assessment that the American century is over. With the uncertain future of the European Union, the escalation of political tensions between China and its neighbors, America's ambivalence toward financing and staffing a perpetual "war on terror" throughout the world, and ever new ways of hybridizing religion and the politics of nationalism throughout the world, we begin to see the urgency of Schmitt's questions concerning technology, the nation-state, and global conflict in ever sharper focus. For a scholar perpetually out of sync with the postwar world, his critical reflections for an Anglophone audience seem to be arriving just in time.

Notes

1. I owe an invaluable debt of gratitude to Milda Zilinskaite for her assistance in comparing the German and Spanish versions of this essay for translation. ♠ [\[#N1-pt1\]](#)
2. The journal in which the Spanish essay appears served as the organ of the Institute that bore the same name in Madrid under Franco's Spain in the 1950s. Schmitt's participation in the intellectual life of the Institute, as well as other centers of academic scholarship and jurisprudence throughout Europe, coincided with his inability to secure an academic post in Germany due to his former affiliation and membership with the Nazi Party. Throughout the 1950s and 60s, Schmitt would contribute regularly to the life of the journal. His influence on Spanish and Latin American jurists in this period remains an unexplored topic of investigation, although his readers today include scholars regularly associated with both the Left and the Right. For a larger overview of Schmitt's influence in Spain, See José Antonio López García, "La presencia de Carl Schmitt en España." ♠ [\[#N2-pt1\]](#)
3. See Mohler (ed.), *Freundschaftliche Begegnungen. Festschrift für Ernst Jünger zum 60.*, 133-160). ♠ [\[#N3-pt1\]](#)
4. See *Staat, Grossraum, Nomos: Arbeiten aus den Jahren 1916-1969* (ed. Günter Maschke), 551. ♠ [\[#N4-pt1\]](#)
5. See Schmitt, *Writings on War*, particularly the essays: "Turn to the Discriminating Concept of War" [1937] and "The International Crime of the War of Aggression and the principle 'Nullum crimen, nulla poenia sine lege'" [1945]. ♠ [\[#N5-pt1\]](#)
6. "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (tr. William Lovitt), 3-35. ♠ [\[#N6-pt1\]](#)

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